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CONTACT:

HYBRID BANANA GERMPLASM FOR INDIA

New Delhi, May 1994 -- In an effort to assist India in upgrading its banana research program, the International Network for the Improvement of Banana and Plantain (INIBAP) this year will send improved hybrid germplasm for evaluation and use by Indian scientists.

The CGIAR-affiliated institution, headquartered near Montpellier, France, will also send about 100 samples of cultivated banana varieties to the India's National Board for Plant Genetic Resources for classification.

The germplasm, from the Honduran Foundation for Agricultural Research breeding program, has resistance to diseases prevalent in India.

The assistance is a result of a 1992 survey by INIBAP scientists of banana diseases in the main production areas in southern India.

Bananas and plantains are particularly difficult crops to breed. Most of all those currently grown are natural varieties, produced on small farms, and are sold and eaten locally. India's annual banana production is about 5.8 million tons.

India, being a donor of INIBAP--a center of the Consultative Group on

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International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)--, is also a member of the Regional Network for Asia and the Pacific. Its representative is K.L. Chadha, deputy director general for horticulture at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

INIBAP is also working with scientists at the new national banana research center currently being constructed near Tiruchirapalli.

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